



Consumer Services Department

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## CSD *News Release*

**January 25, 2002**

### **FEBRUARY 3-9 IS NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK CSD TO MARK THE WEEK WITH SEVERAL ACTIVITIES**

The fourth annual observation of 'National Consumer Protection Week' takes place February 3 – 9, and the Miami-Dade County Consumer Services Department (CSD) will join local, state and federal consumer agencies in a nationwide effort to help educate consumers about their rights, and empower them to protect themselves from fraud and abuse in the marketplace.

The theme for the week is "Privacy."

The Board of County Commissioners will formally launch this year's celebration with a proclamation on Thursday morning, January 31<sup>st</sup>.

The first major event will take place at ten o'clock Monday morning, February 4, when the Department, in collaboration with Miami Dade County Public Schools and the Alliance for Aging, hosts a symposium entitled "Privacy and You in 2002." The venue is the Commission Chambers at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 111 N.W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street in downtown Miami.

County Manager Steve Shiver will make opening remarks.

The symposium, which is open to the public, will examine a spectrum of privacy issues, with an emphasis on identity theft, telephone solicitations, the need to check credit reports, and privacy notices.

Panelists will be Anne Baumgartner, Editor of the Miami Herald's 'Action Line'; Betsy Broder, Assistant Director in the Division of Marketing Services at the Federal Trade Commission; Michael Froomkin, Professor of Law at the University of Miami Law School; Susan Grant, Vice President for Public Policy at the National Consumers League; Wayne Ivey, a Special Agent who deals with identity theft investigations at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; and Tom Sadaka, Special Counsel in the Florida Statewide Prosecutor's Office.

The moderator will be CSD's Consumer Advocate, Leonard Elias.

The symposium will be broadcast live by Miami-Dade County Television. It will be repeated that evening at 7:00, at the same time the following Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, and on Sunday morning, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:00.

'Identity Theft' will be the theme of an audio-visual presentation, which officers of the Consumer Protection Division will give at different County government sites throughout the week.

The presentations will take place in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Government Center on Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> and Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup>. On Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> they will take place at the South Dade Government Center, 10710 S.W. 211<sup>th</sup> Street. Presentations will also be made at the Joseph Caleb Community Center, 5400 N.W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue on Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup>. The presentations at each site will be at 10:00 am, 12 noon, 2:00 pm and 4:00pm.

In addition, a variety of information and literature will be available throughout the day at these locations, and enforcement officers will be available to answer questions.

CSD has also collaborated with the Consumer Affairs Division in Broward County, and with Palm Beach County's Division of Consumer Affairs, in the design and manufacture of a commemorative 'jar opener' with a message highlighting the fight against identity theft.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes across the country, and statistics compiled by the Federal Trade Commission show that Florida ranks fourth in the number of victims. Miami is a major problem area, ranking number one among cities in Florida and number five in cities across the country, in identity theft victims.

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*The Miami Dade Consumer Services Department is an agency of Miami-Dade County government that protects consumers through complaint mediation, business regulation, and consumer education. The Department operates the Consumer Hotline (305) 375-3677, a central telephone number for consumer complaints and information.*